



# WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

## Welcome Home Bill Expands Veterans' Benefits



*Rep. Anthony Verga, Lt. Gov. Kerry Healey, Sen. Stephen Brewer, and Sec. Thomas Kelley watch Gov. Mitt Romney sign the Welcome Home Bill*

This year's Veterans' Day ceremony at the State House paid special tribute to veterans, as Governor Mitt Romney signed into law House Bill 4469, commonly referred to as "The Welcome Home Bill." This law expands benefits to veterans,

members of the Massachusetts National Guard, and their families. The bill provides over 13 new and expanded benefits, such as:

- a \$1,000 bonus for those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and a \$500 bonus for those who have served in areas other than Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11
- an increase from \$1,500 to \$2,000 in the annuity payments to blind, paraplegic, and disabled veterans, and Gold Star parents and spouses
- an increase in the death benefit for the families of deceased Massachusetts National Guard members from \$5,000 to \$100,000
- education and fee waivers for all members of the Massachusetts National Guard at all state and community colleges and universities (effective July 2006)
- an increase in daily pay for Massachusetts National Guard members from \$75 to \$100

Chairmen of the newly-established Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, Senator Stephen M. Brewer and Representative Anthony J. Verga, are pleased with the quick passage of this first piece of legislation to come out of the Committee. Chairman Verga said, "With this bill, we have cemented our pledge to those who protect us, the men and women of the armed forces, for they deserve nothing less."

## A Message from Heidi



*Diane Harness-DiGloria, Heidi Kruckenberg, and host Paul Lazarovich on the Cranberry Country Journal*

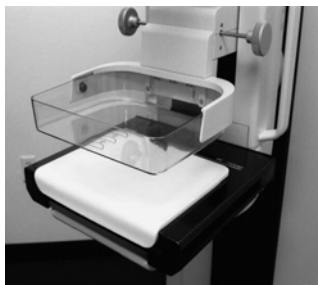
Lights, camera, action! The Women Veterans' Network Committee has embarked upon a six-month statewide tour of local cable access TV shows to talk about women veterans' issues. Committee members will be visiting community access stations across the state to talk about state and federal veterans' benefits, as well as women-specific programs and resources.

Veterans' agents across the state host or regularly appear on local TV programs to speak about veterans' issues. The Committee has worked with these agents to make connections with local TV programs for airtime. With the help of the Middleborough veterans' agent, Paul Provencher, I was able to appear on the Veterans' Day edition of the Cranberry Country Journal with Diane Harness-DiGloria (Women Veterans' Program Manager at the Brockton VA). The Watertown agent, Bob Erickson, hosted Pat Robinson (Women Veterans' Program Manager at the Boston VA) and Bonnie Roessner (sexual trauma counselor at the Brockton and Boston Vet Centers) on a late December edition of his show. Committee members Lauren Dever (of the Boston VA's Homeless Womens' Outreach and Case Management Program) and Ethel LaSalle (vice president of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans) were interviewed in January on Boston cable TV. Other Committee members have forthcoming interviews that will air on New Bedford, Northampton, and Canton local access TV.

The Committee's goal is to raise awareness of women veterans' issues through these statewide interviews. So, tune in to your local cable station and keep an eye out for members of the Women Veterans' Network Committee.

*Heidi Kruckenberg—Women's Coordinator*

## **A More Comfortable Mammogram**



***The MammoPad reduces mammogram discomfort***

Medical experts recommend that women age 40 and older receive screening mammograms and a breast exam by their doctor at least every one to two years. Yet many women do not get regular mammograms, in part because of concerns about discomfort. To address that concern, VA Boston Healthcare System has begun using the MammoPad to reduce the discomfort associated with this procedure. The MammoPad is a breast cushion made of special foam that is applied to the surface of the mammography machine. It provides a softer, warmer, more comfortable mammogram. The pad is radiolucent or “invisible” to X-ray and does not impair the ability to interpret the X-ray films. MammoPad received FDA clearance in 2001.

In addition to mammograms, VA Boston Healthcare System provides primary and specialty medical and mental healthcare to women veterans and eligible spouses within private and safe settings. If you would like to learn more about the more comfortable mammogram, obtain information about women’s health services, or enroll at the VA, please contact Pat Robinson, LICSW at 857-364-4120 or Diane Harness-DiGloria, NP at 774-826-1435.

By Pat Robinson, Women Veterans’ Program Manager at the VA Boston Healthcare System

## **Speakers’ Bureau Needs Volunteer Speakers**

The Women Veterans’ Network is looking for women veterans to be guest speakers in their own neighboring communities, particularly in western Massachusetts. We receive calls from cities and towns, schools, organizations, and private groups looking for women veterans to speak at different veterans’ events.

Volunteering with the Speakers’ Bureau is fun, easy, and always at your convenience! We will contact you with information about the organization making the request. Once we have your permission, we would then ask the organization to call you with more details.

INTERESTED? Please contact the Women Veterans’ Network to enroll. Call 617-210-5781 or email [dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us](mailto:dvswomen@vet.state.ma.us).

By Kamika Hind, Women Veterans’ Network Assistant

## **WAC Veterans’ Association Performs Service**

Bay State Chapter 14 of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) Veterans’ Association performs community service for women veterans across the state. Chapter 14 is the Massachusetts chapter of the national veterans’ service organization whose membership is open to women who served or are currently serving in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, Women’s Army Corps, Army, Army Reserve, or the Army National Guard.

Chapter 14 members participate in a range of community, local, national, and international service projects, including VA hospital volunteer work and providing care packages to women serving active duty overseas. Chapter 14 also publishes *The Bean Pot*, a newsletter which keeps members aware of local Chapter business, projects, and pertinent veterans’ information. The national WAC Veterans’ Association provides financial support to scholarships for deserving women students, the U.S. Army Women’s Museum Foundation Fund, and the Hospitalized Veterans’ Writing Project.

If you are interested in learning more about the WAC Veterans’ Association’s 55-year tradition of community service, please contact Chapter 14 Vice President, Eileen Merullo at 781-289-0633.

**Did you know there are over 28,200 women veterans living in Massachusetts?**

## **Women Who Fly Exhibit**



***Kathleen Melihan flying an Army helicopter***

As the African proverb notes, “Until lions have their historians, the tale of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.” We need to be historians for women so that their role in history is duly noted. With the help of individuals and organizations,

the Women at Work Museum preserves stories about the contributions of women throughout history and around the world.

At the museum, the exhibit “Women Who Fly” presents individuals who have surpassed expectations. Come to the museum, located in Attleboro, and tell us your story or the story of someone you think should be featured in this exhibit. For more information, contact Katherine Honey at 508-222-4430 or [khoney@comcast.net](mailto:khoney@comcast.net).

By Katherine Honey, Women at Work Museum

## News & Updates

### Phenomenal Women

On November 10, the State House Nurse's Hall was filled with military uniforms as the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women (MCSW) and the Women Veterans' Network (WVN) came together to celebrate and honor Massachusetts women veterans at the first "Women Are Veterans Too!" award ceremony. An audience of more than 100 welcomed speakers CDR Joan O'Connor Kelley, retired Navy veteran; Lillian J. Eaton, President of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans; and keynote speaker CAPT Margaret Oglesby, of Southbridge Unit 747 of the Massachusetts Army National Guard, who spoke about her nine months of service in Afghanistan.

"Outstanding Woman Veteran" awards were presented to **Alice Morrison** of Needham, a former Women's Army Corps Nurse in WWII, and **Kaye Yoon** of Brockton, a former Army Combat Medic in Vietnam. Senator Scott P. Brown of Wrentham and House Assistant Majority Leader Lida E. Harkins of Needham presented citations to Alice Morrison. Representative Christine E. Canavan of Brockton presented a citation to Kaye Yoon, making note of Yoon's two young granddaughters as being representative of hope for the future generation of honorable women.

"It's especially nice to receive an award for being a woman veteran. Whenever I hear those words [woman veteran] I feel like I can walk a little taller, hold my head up a little higher," said Honoree Morrison as she accepted her award.

Linda Brantley, Executive Director of the MSCW and Heidi Kruckenberg, Coordinator of the WVN, said of the event: "We are pleased to have hosted a statewide celebration of women's military service. It makes sense for the MCSW and WVN—two state agencies that advocate for the betterment of the lives of women in the Commonwealth—to work together to honor women who served in the military. Women's participation in the military, which preceded suffrage, has been a pioneering effort that opened the doors for women's participation in other arenas of society. The MCSW and the WVN commend the Massachusetts legislature for recognizing the unique needs of women in the Commonwealth and allocating funds for both the WVN and MCSW. Not all states take such good care of their women citizens."

*By Paula Daddona, Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women*

### Update from the Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans



*Committee members at Hanscom AFB: (l-r back row) June Newman, Joyce Humphrey, Pat Robinson, Stephanie Landry, Regina Jackson (l-r front row) Eileen Merullo, Edythe Sheridan, Ethel LaSalle, Lillian J. Eaton*

After two years of bumps and disappointments, the Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans is pleased to be back on the

fast track for promoting the interests of women veterans. Appointments were made this summer to fill all the Committee seats (see list of members below). The Committee has also set up a regular meeting schedule and elected Committee officers.

In addition to all this, the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Women Veterans' Luncheon was held on Sunday, October 16, at Hanscom Air Force Base. Approximately 100 women veterans enjoyed a delicious meal, a health fair, a jewelry sale, and a raffle. Kolleen M. Dickinson, Command Sergeant Major of the Army National Guard's 726<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Battalion, was the featured speaker and she spoke about her tour of duty in Iraq. Although this was the first successful luncheon the Committee has held after two years of having to cancel due to low registration, it was a huge success. The accomplishments of the past six months are due to the hard work and dedication of all the women who serve on the Committee.

#### Committee members

Lillian J. Eaton, President  
Ethel LaSalle, Vice President  
Patricia Robinson, Secretary  
Regina Jackson, Treasurer  
Joyce Humphrey, Chaplain  
Edythe Sheridan, Sergeant-at-Arms  
Shirley Jackson  
Stephanie Landry  
Eileen Merullo  
June Newman  
Sandra Whitley

*By Lillian J. Eaton, Governor's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans*



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### VOICE Program Helps Launch "Hire-a-Veteran" Month in Massachusetts



**Gov. Romney proclaims November 2005 "Hire-a-Veteran" Month**

On November 3, Governor Mitt Romney declared November 2005 as "Hire-a-Veteran" month in Massachusetts. Governor Romney noted that many veterans have employment and training needs and recognized Saints Memorial Medical Center in Lowell and Acting President Judith Casagrande for their exemplary efforts in employing veterans. Thomas G. Kelley, Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services (DVS), and Jane C. Edmonds, Secretary of the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) stated their respective agencies' commitment to help the Massachusetts veteran population gain meaningful training and employment. Brigadier General Michael D. Akey, MAARNG, expressed heartfelt thanks on behalf of military veterans for these efforts. Representative Anthony J. Verga and Senator Stephen M. Brewer, co-chairmen of the Massa-

chusetts Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, also attended.

The Veterans' Outreach Initiative for Competitive Employment (VOICE) program at DVS, in partnership with the Department of Workforce Development/Division of Career Services, and the U.S. Department of Labor sponsored the Massachusetts' "Hire-a-Veteran" campaign as part of a nationwide effort to provide servicemembers leaving the military with employment and training opportunities. The month-long event featured workshops for both job-seeking veterans and employers at Massachusetts One-Stop Career Centers. "Hire-a-Veteran" month was one of the goals of the VOICE program, which seeks to enhance coordination across provider agencies to ensure that veterans receive access to employment and training resources from governmental, community, and faith-based providers. To date, VOICE has distributed information to 20,000 veterans as part of the DVS "Welcome Home" initiative. DVS and partners have contacted more than 160,000 Massachusetts employers inviting them to become "veteran-friendly." For more information, veterans, employers, and service providers may contact VOICE at 617-210-5970 or [veteransvoice@vet.state.ma.us](mailto:veteransvoice@vet.state.ma.us).

4 *By Erinn Crete, VOICE*